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SIXPENCE

JANUARY 3, 1947



NIGERIA'S NAMESAKE, H.M.S. NIGERIA recently paid a visit to Lagos, the capital of the West African Colony and Protectorate, where she is here seen in harbour. Of several official ceremonies marking the occasion the most important was a service at Christ Church Cathedral, at which the ship's company paraded behind the Royal Marines band. Cordial relations established by this visit were enhanced by facilities granted to the local inhabitants to inspect the warship. H.M.S. Nigeria is a cruiser of 8,000 tons displacement, with a main armament of twelve 6-in. guns and a designed speed of 33 knots. *Photo, Public Press*

*Edited by Sir John Hammerton*

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## When Great Thunder of Battle Rolled Over Crete



IMPERIAL FORCES on the island of Crete, lacking air support, had to endure ceaseless bombing by the Luftwaffe and assaults by paratroopers. During the evacuation all embarkation points were subjected to attack, among them the British naval base at Suda Bay (1). The decisive attack on the island opened on May 20, 1941, when Iraklion (2) was plastered by German aircraft. Airborne assault units were mostly Alpine regiments and were transported in Junkers three-engine troop-carriers and gliders (3). British, New Zealand and Greek troops took such heavy toll of their assailants that the Germans never again used airborne troops in force. See facing page.

Photos, War Office, N. Z. Govt.

# Was the Defence of Crete a Turning-Point?

By Major-General  
**SIR CHARLES GWYNN,**  
K.C.B., D.S.O.

THE loss of Crete, following on the failure of our intervention in Greece and Rommel's counter-offensive in Libya, was a bitter blow. It is not surprising that at the time there was a tendency to believe that there had been lack of foresight in preparations for defence and of co-operation between the Services in meeting the attack.

Publication on July 3, 1946, of the dispatch written on September 5, 1941, by General Sir Archibald Wavell (as he then was) enables us now to judge more fairly. Primarily, it reveals the extent of our commitments in the Middle East and the lack of resources to meet them. Incidentally, it confirms the accuracy of the vivid unofficial account of the fighting in Crete compiled by the archivist of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force. These two records are summarized below.

Shortly after the Italian attack on Greece in October 1940, but before we intervened in that war, two battalions were sent to Crete to strengthen the defences of Suda Bay, which was a convenient refuelling port for the Navy. With the Greek Division then on the island this gave adequate protection against any Italian attack. But the Greek Division was soon transferred to the mainland, together with all available labour and mules, and when in February 1941 the Greeks appealed for assistance in view of the German threat, a third battalion was sent to the island and orders were given to prepare a base for a division and to press on with the construction of airfields. When, however, we became deeply involved in operations in Greece, Iraq and Libya, it became impracticable to reinforce the garrison, and airfield construction was hampered by lack of materials and labour. But since Suda Bay was increasingly used by the Royal Navy, the Mobile Naval Base Defence Organization (M.N.B.D.O.), under Major-General F. C. Weston, R.M., was sent to improve its defences.

### Minus Equipment and Transport

That was the situation on the island when the evacuation from Greece took place at the end of April 1941. Some of the troops evacuated were sent direct to Egypt, but in order to have a shorter voyage and economize shipping about 27,000 were landed in Crete, pending shipping being available for their transfer to Egypt and for their relief by fresh troops. Some units were actually sent on, but owing to the situation in Iraq and Egypt it was impossible to replace the remainder by a fresh division until one could be brought back from Abyssinia.

It was therefore necessary to be prepared to meet the anticipated attack with the troops

actually on the island, in spite of their having lost all their heavy equipment and transport, and of their exhausted and disorganized condition. Every effort was made to replace deficiencies, but Egypt had no large reserves and much was sunk en route; guns sent forward were mostly captured Italian weapons, and only nine infantry tanks could be supplied.



GENERAL SIR ARCHIBALD WAVELL as C.-in-C. Middle East, on a tour of inspection in the Suda Bay area (see map below) in Nov. 1940.

Seldom can troops have been so poorly equipped. Moreover, the island was singularly ill-adapted to defence against the form of attack which threatened. From east to west 160 miles long and 40 miles in depth at its widest, a high mountain chain skirts the southern coast, making communications from north to south very difficult. The main ports are all on the northern coast - from east to west, Heraklion (Candia), Retimo and Suda Bay - and on it there are also many beaches where landing by boat or aircraft is practicable. Roads in the interior are little more than mule tracks, and the only good road for lateral communication runs along the coast. As a result ground troops of the defences were widely dispersed.

The Navy, to give protection against landings, and to convoy ships carrying heavy stores, had to operate in waters exposed to air assault, and airfields, within easy range of superior forces on the mainland, were equally

subject to attack. It was therefore apparent that when the enemy opened a full-scale air offensive the Navy would only be able to operate on the north coast under cover of darkness and at great risk, and that any attempt to station aircraft permanently on Crete would invite their complete destruction.

### Discharge of Cargoes Difficult

The evacuation from Greece which began on the night of April 24-25 was practically completed by April 29, and on April 30 General Wavell appointed Major-General Bernard Freyberg, V.C., D.S.O., to take command in Crete. His troops were already distributed as follows:

At Heraklion, two British battalions (2nd Black Watch, 2nd Yorks and Lancs, later to be joined by the 2nd Leicesters from Egypt), three Greek battalions, a composite unit of 300 Australians and 250 Artillerymen armed as infantry. At Retimo, four Australian battalions, six Greek battalions. At Suda Bay and Canea, under command of General Weston, two improvised Australian battalions, 1,200 British infantry of various units, a regiment of R.H.A. armed as infantry, the M.N.B.D.O. and two Greek battalions. In the Maleme sector, the 4th N.Z. Brigade and 1st Welsh Regiment (in the area west of Canea); the 5th N.Z. at the Maleme Aerodrome (10 miles west of Canea); the 10th Infantry Brigade (consisting of the 20th N.Z. Battalion, a composite N.Z. battalion formed from various personnel, and two Greek battalions), with one unbrigaded Greek battalion was distributed in the Gafatas area south-west of Canea.

Owing to the shortage of transport, Heraklion and Retimo were practically isolated and out of supporting distance from the Suda Bay group. The 4th N.Z. Brigade was in general reserve, not to be committed without orders from Headquarters. The main airfield was at Maleme, but there were also airstrips at Heraklion and Retimo.

THE immediate business was to reorganize these various units and construct defences. The former task included the withdrawal of men from units to man guns arriving from Egypt. For the latter little material was available, and there was an acute shortage of entrenching tools and native labour. From the first the island was subjected to frequent bombing attacks, but in the earlier stages these were mainly directed against the ports. A number of ships were sunk and discharge of cargoes was very difficult, but A.A. defences and the few aircraft still based on the island inflicted substantial losses on the



## Great Stories of the War Retold

enemy. The troops in the cover of orange groves escaped serious casualties, and when they had recovered from exhaustion their morale was high.

But it was realized that the test would come when the enemy had completed his concentration of air power and preparation of additional airfields, at which he was known to be hard at work. It was also known that he was busily collecting craft for a seaborne landing. From May 13 onwards the scale of air attack increased, and it was evident that aircraft based on the island were in danger of being completely destroyed. It was therefore decided to withdraw what were left—four Hurricanes and three Gladiators—on May 19. On that day there was a brief respite; presumably knowing the coast was clear the enemy was preparing for decisive action.

### Seaborne Landing Attempts Crushed

At 6.10 a.m. on May 20 this began with a heavy attack directed on the perimeter of the Maleme airfield, and shortly before 8.0 a.m. intensive bombing and ground strafing on an unprecedented scale developed over the whole area from Canea and the Akrotiri peninsula, which encloses Suda Bay, to the Tavronitis valley, south-west of Maleme. The attack was specially concentrated on the defences around the airfield, where it continued in full violence for 90 minutes leaving the troops crouched in their slit trenches dazed and stunned.

Then suddenly from the south-west, flying low over the foothills, came streams of Junkers 52s, and from them hundreds of parachutists dropped, reaching the ground quickly from a height of 300-500 feet. They met practically no A.A. fire, for the approach had been cleverly planned to escape the fire of guns which mainly faced north and whose crews were too stunned for quick action. Parachute troops who landed near the aerodrome had short lives. But all could not be located, and in particular those who dropped to the west in the dried-up river bed of the Tavronitis, met no defenders. There also, and on the western beaches,

gliders were able to land; and this success the enemy correctly concentrated on exploiting, together with another danger spot which developed in the Galatas area where a Greek battalion was surrounded and ran out of ammunition. Apart from these two danger spots the enemy had no lasting success, and group after group of parachutists was disposed of during the day. A gallant attempt to deal with the landing west of the airfield by a counter-attack supported by two tanks was held up when both broke down.

Retimo and Heraklion were also attacked during the afternoon, but only parties that landed out of range of the defences were able to secure a permanent foothold, and the sole success they achieved was to complete the isolation of the two detachments. Thereafter these attacks were not pressed, the enemy concentrating his efforts in the Maleme-Canea area.

By the end of the first day the N.Z. battalion on the west side of the airfield was in danger of being cut off, and another counter-attack having failed to relieve the situation it was withdrawn to the east. By midday on May 21 the defenders were forced off the aerodrome altogether, though it was still kept under fire, and in the late afternoon enemy troop-carriers began to land on it. They suffered desperate losses, but persisting in the attempt the enemy's strength steadily grew.

During the night a deliberate counter-attack was organized to recover the airfield, but it failed, in spite of a particularly gallant effort by the Maori battalion. But on that night the Navy disrupted an important part of the enemy's plans, for it met and completely destroyed an attempt at a seaborne landing. Early in the morning of the following night a similar attempt was also frustrated. But the enemy succeeded in withdrawing most of his force under a smoke-screen and, unfortunately, unable to get clear away before daylight, two of our cruisers and a destroyer were sunk by aircraft. Thereafter the Navy could not afford to operate effectively north of the island.

During May 22 airborne troops continued to pour in and pressure on the New Zealanders increased, the enemy working around the flank of the 5th Brigade and threatening to cut it off; consequently it began to withdraw to the Canea defences, and by the morning of the 23rd it was in its new position. By that time, however, the enemy's western and southern groups could co-operate and the situation grew even more serious. That night the 4th Brigade was brought in from reserve to relieve the 5th for rest and reorganization.

### Severe March for Exhausted Troops

During the 24th the enemy, now in greatly superior strength, maintained heavy pressure but was evidently massing for a decisive attack. On the 25th it came, and a furious battle raged all day. The line substantially held, but the defenders, desperately depleted, had to fall back again during the night and the whole force in the Canea-Suda Bay area came under Major-General Weston's command. During the 26th it withdrew to a position just west of the village of Suda, where it was reinforced by two Commando battalions, under Brigadier Laycock, which disembarked from warships at Suda on the night of the 26th.

By now it was evident that the game was up. The greater part of the base area was in enemy hands, and Suda Bay could no longer be used. All troops were exhausted and had suffered under air attacks which, once positions of opposing troops could be located, had been intensified. Early in the morning of May 27 Major-General Freyberg asked and received permission to evacuate the island, and Major-General Weston's command started to withdraw across the mountains to the south coast. Unluckily, attempts to communicate orders to Retimo failed, and though the group held out till May 31 it was finally overwhelmed. The Heraklion force was, however, evacuated by cruiser and destroyer on the night 28th-29th, just in time to escape a heavy attack the enemy was preparing.

The retreat of the main force involved a severe march for exhausted troops, but it was successfully covered by rearguards and was not closely pursued. Embarkation from the south coast began on the night 28th-29th, but owing to heavy losses of ships in passage to and from Egypt it was decided that it must end on May 31—June 1. This necessitated leaving behind part of the rearguard, including most of Laycock's force and an Australian battalion, but out of 27,650 Imperial troops on the island at the beginning of the attack 14,580 were evacuated.

ALL through the struggle the troops had fought magnificently and had inflicted very heavy losses on the enemy, who in the end had landed over 30,000 men as well as possessing overwhelming air-power and superiority in armaments. The Navy also had had a desperate task, and never has it better earned the gratitude and admiration of the Army.

The enemy's success was due to his reckless exploitation of lives and material, and we now know how disastrously this affected his strategic plans. He had to postpone his attack on Russia by a month—the primary cause of his failure to take Moscow and his involvement in the winter campaign of 1941-42. He was also compelled to abandon his designs on Iraq and Syria, immensely relieving our dangerous situation in the Middle East.

General Wavell may well claim that the battle of Crete was not fought in vain. But it is certainly amazing that, writing while the situation in Russia was at its worst, he had the courage and foresight to prophesy that "the fighting in Crete may prove a turning point in the war."



STREAMS OF JUNKERS appeared over Crete on May 20, 1941, flying so low that the German parachutists were in the air for a very short time. The aircraft approached from an unexpected direction—the south-west—and many of the A.A. guns, being wrongly sited, were unable to engage the large, slow-flying targets. War Office photograph

## Trooping the Colour for First Time in Japan



**BRITISH TRADITIONAL CEREMONY** never before performed in Japan was carried out recently by the 2nd Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers, outside the Imperial Palace at Tokyo. Headed by the Pioneer section wearing white leather aprons, the drum and fife band (1) played throughout the parade. In the march past (2) the Colour was saluted by Lt. General H. C. H. Robertson, C.B.E., D.S.O. (3, right), appointed C-in-C. of the B.C.O.F. on April 15, 1946. Led by a drummer, the Regiment's goat mascot (4). See also illus. page 101. PAGE 581 Photos, I.N.P.

## The Army Stages Its Own Battlefronts Show



**BRITISH ARMoured STAFF CAR**, one of two made but not used, has armour plating of 14 mm. and is fitted with wirelets and an interior telephone. The glass in the windows is 2½ inches thick, yet affords perfectly clear vision.

**O**N A BOMBED SITE IN OXFORD ST., London, in December 1946, the Army exhibited realistic jungle and mountain warfare scenes and war relics the latter including the two swords surrendered to Admiral the Viscount Mountbatten by Field-Marshal Count Terauchi, Supreme Commander of the Japanese Expeditionary Forces in the Southern Regions. The bullet-proof car used by Field-Marshal Goering was displayed—a Mercedes 20 feet long and weighing five tons, with an eight-cylinder, supercharged engine, armour plated and, as an additional protection against mines and grenades, with a specially fitted steel floor.

Authentic drawings of the Malayan campaign and of 3½ years of life in Japanese prison camps were made secretly, at risk of torture and death, by Mr. Leo Rawlings, late of the Royal Artillery. His brushes were made from human hair and the colours from blood, chalk, crushed stones, soap and oil. A special exhibit was the Union Jack which was flown outside Field-Marshal Montgomery's headquarters on Luneburg Heath on May 4, 1945, when he received there the formal surrender of the German forces. A varied display of German medals and badges, and of German and Italian uniforms and equipment, called for attention. Arranged by Headquarters London District, the well-attended exhibition was in aid of The Army Benevolent Fund.

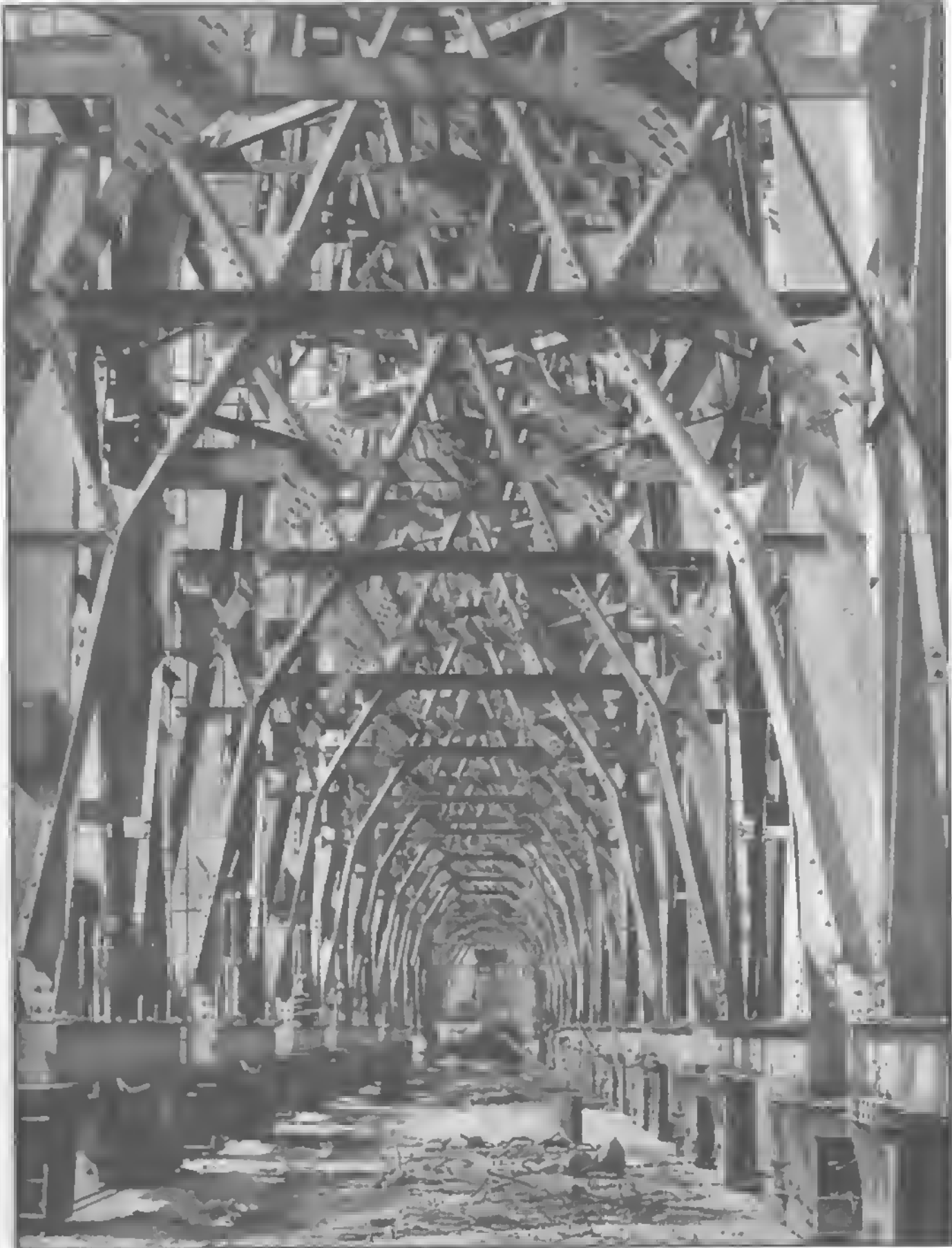


**MOUNTAIN WARFARE** under Arctic conditions demands specialized equipment; and here Cpl. "Frost," wearing a white camouflage suit, is manning a Vickers machine-gun mounted on a Nansen battia sledge. Mountain troops wore string vests to conserve body heat



**IN THE JUNGLE REPLICa** a British patrol is seen wading through one of the swamps so frequently met with in the Arakan. The sufferings and heroism of the armies that campaigned in Burma were realistically depicted in this special section. Photos, THE WAR ILLUSTRATED, *Pland News*

## New Power for London's War-Battered Dockland



AT THE ROYAL ALBERT DOCK, NORTH WOOLWICH, replacement of wartime losses of cargo-handling equipment forges ahead: this scene on the south quay shows new cranes in course of erection. From the laying of the first German mine in 1919 to the last V2 fired in 1945 the blocking of the Port of London was one of Germany's primary objectives. Although the great Port was subjected to heavy bombing, a large part of our invasion forces sailed from the Thames in June 1944.

## How the Aluminium House is Erected in Minutes



**ONE EVERY 2½ MINUTES** is the estimated production rate of prefabricated aluminium houses for the month of February 1947. From factories scattered over England and Scotland house sections are transported on trailers to the prepared sites, erected, and all services, including gas, water and electricity, are laid on sometimes in under an hour.

After wall-frames have been filled with concrete and given a "skin" of aluminium sheeting they are placed in drying kilns (1). An assembly-line in a factory at Weston-super-Mare (2) gives an impression of orderliness and speed. The four sections of a house are loaded on to four lorries (3) and taken to the site for erection (4). It is possible to move into a house which left the factory only that morning (5). The kitchens are very well equipped (6).  
*Photos, Keystone*      **PAGE 584**





## Fresh Visions of Hope for Leaderless Germany

**T**HE VISIT TO ENGLAND OF DR. KURT SCHUMACHER, chairman of the German Social Democratic Party, and the statements he made represent a most heartening tonic to the Germans. At the invitation of the British Labour Party he arrived here (with a number of his colleagues) in November 1946 to speak for his people, describe frankly the existing state of affairs in that devastated and hungry land and to suggest remedies. Brushing aside certain adverse criticisms as to the nature and purpose of his visit, he said in London (Sunday Times, Dec. 8):

"We have made some frank criticisms in these talks, but nothing has been said which would justify the anxieties expressed in some parts of the world. Naturally, we understand the historic reasons for these anxieties, but we tell the world that we are ready to accept an invitation to any country which shows the same progressive international good will as has been shown to us here, and that we trust that in any such talks we could create an atmosphere of conciliation, whether those who meet us round a table are the Labour movements or other progressive forces. There has been much whispering about the purposes of our visit here, but there is nothing mysterious about it. The Labour Party has simply given us the chance to break the ice; that was our only purpose. Some people have slandered us as being instruments of the Labour Party or the Labour Government. We have come here as free and independent German Social Democrats and we return the same. A German party which would make itself the fool of any one of the occupation Powers would be lost; there are examples."

Dr. Schumacher's visit brought about the first constructive personal contact between devastated, chaotic Germany and the outside world, and combined with the formal fusion agreement to raise British prestige among the German people.



DR. SCHUMACHER, one-time leader of the German Social Democratic Party, who stated in London that the British people had so far made the biggest sacrifices in food and foreign exchange to help the Germans, paid a visit to the German P.O.W. "university" at Winton Park, Beaconsfield, Bucks, where he spoke to his youthful compatriots about the future of their country (above and left).



**M**R. BEVIN, the British Foreign Minister, may have experienced a feeling of frustration at the United Nations Conference at Lake Success, New York (below), but he had the satisfaction of signing, on Dec. 2, 1946, the agreement for the economic fusion of the British and American Zones of Germany, to come into force on Jan. 1, 1947; France and the Soviet Union to be welcomed into the merger at any time they might wish to join. Mr. Bevin expressed the opinion that it was the beginning

of the end of economic troubles so far as Germany was concerned. Great Britain and the United States would make equal financial contributions to put the combined area on a self-supporting basis, total joint expenditure over three years being estimated at £250,000,000.

### Danger of Revival of National Socialist Party

Speaking in London on Dec. 3, Dr. Schumacher expressed his confidence that this plan to rehabilitate the joint zones could be made to work, and that this portion of Germany could become self-supporting in three years.

To ensure success, Dr. Schumacher advocated the cessation of the dismantling of factories in both zones and the granting of priority to the reconstruction of key plants. He suggested that German exports of electric power should be halved, to permit of a greater home consumption; and the big industries—coal, steel, chemicals, electricity, gas, water and building materials—subjected to socialization, but small and "middle" capitalists might be allowed reasonable margins of profit on goods for export, providing nothing were done to encourage monopolies. He stressed the fact that Big Business had supported the Nazi regime, and Big Business still existed in Germany today. While there was the possibility of the transference of its monetary power into political power, the danger of a revival of the National Socialist party would exist.

### HIS MAJESTY'S SHIPS

### H.M.S. *Truant*

On the evening of April 9, 1940, H.M.S. *Truant*, a submarine of 1,090 tons, completed early in the war, torpedoed the German cruiser *Keritruhe* off Kristiansand while that ship was engaged in covering the enemy invasion of Norway. Though hunted by destroyers for 4½ hours, she escaped with slight damage from depth charges. Not long afterwards, while on passage to Gibraltar, she intercepted and recaptured the Norwegian motor ship *Tropic Sea*, which the Germans had seized.

In the Mediterranean the *Truant* was active in operations against Italian convoys proceeding to Libya. In December 1940 she destroyed two supply ships and a tanker; and in March 1941 she entered the harbour of Buerat, in the Gulf of Sirte, to attack another tanker. While engaged in sinking an enemy ship in the Adriatic she was obliged to dive in 20 feet of water, with the result that her bows became embedded in the mud.

Later the *Truant* proceeded to the Far East. After the Battle of the Java Sea she was one of the last vessels to get away from Surabaya before the Japanese occupation. In December 1942 she returned to Britain for refit. She is here seen in Holy Loch on the Clyde after her 2½ years abroad. Recently she has been used for experimental work, and is expected to be straggled in the near future. (See also illus. in page 600.) Admiralty photograph



## 5th. Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards

**A**FTER completing mobilization the Regiment embarked for France and landed at St. Nazaire at the end of September 1939. A few days were spent unloading the vehicles and collecting stores, then the trek to Northern France began. The first stage was a train journey to Malincourt, near St. Poi, thence to the Lille area, in and around which the rest of the winter was spent training.



Occasional increases in tension, which threatened the unreality of the "phony" war, caused swift and usually midnight moves up to the Franco-Belgian frontier in the area of Roubaix.

May 10, 1940, found the Regiment in the outskirts of the town; an overnight air raid on Lille, and varying disquieting reports over the wireless, suggested interesting developments. Early in the morning news was received that the German army had invaded Belgium, and the British Government had pledged their support to the latter. At 4 p.m. the move into Belgium commenced, the Regiment being part of the 3rd Infantry Division, commanded by the then Major-General Montgomery. At dawn the following morning the 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards were in the area of Louvain.

The next three weeks—up to the final evacuation from Dunkirk—was one long series of rearguard actions, the Regiment, as Divisional Cavalry, always covering the retirement of the infantry. During this period it worked with nearly every division

By permission of Lieut.-Col.  
**R. P. HARDING, D.S.O.**

**T**HIS regiment was formed by the amalgamation in 1922 of the 5th Dragoon Guards and the Inniskilling Dragoons. The former were raised by James II. in 1685; the latter were raised in N. Ireland to oppose him after his dethronement. Both regiments saw their baptism of fire at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. During Marlborough's campaigns both gained several battle honours in the Low Countries. The Inniskilling Dragoons at Waterloo in 1815 formed with the Royals and Greys the Union Brigade which played a large part in the victory. In the Crimea both regiments took part in the charge of the Heavy Brigade, and both served in France throughout the First Great War.



in the B.E.F., ending up with covering the retirement of the 45th Division into Dunkirk from Bergue Canal. On the night of June 3-4 squadrons embarked independently on destroyers from the mole at Dunkirk and returned to England. The Regiment re-formed and mobilized shortly after, first as an anti-invasion force in lodges, and later as an armoured regiment. From 1940 until the summer of 1944 it formed part of the armoured reserve kept in England against the possibility of a German invasion, and went on training steadily with various types of armoured vehicles in preparation for the invasion of Western Europe.

The Regiment went to Normandy in the middle of July 1944, and joined the 7th Armoured Division immediately after the second battle of Caen, replacing the 4th County of London Yeomanry who had

suffered very heavy casualties in the fighting around Villers Bocage. Within two days of joining the division the Regiment went into action for the first time since Dunkirk. During all August it took part in continuous attempts all along the British line to engage the enemy armour and contain it while the Americans broke through on the right. The fighting, though without outstanding features, was continuous and hard, and the Regiment operated under both the Canadian 1st Army and British 2nd Army. By the end of the month the Falaise Gap had been closed and the German armies in France were on the point of retreat.

### Tremendous Reception in Belgium

Next, the Regiment took a leading part in the memorable five days' pursuit through France, the 7th Armoured Division—the left-hand armoured division of the British Army—being directed on Ghent. The 250 miles from the River Seine to Ghent were covered in five exciting days, a mixture of sharp rearguard encounters with the Germans in retreat and a grand triumphal procession through the heart of Northern France. The Belgian frontier was crossed on September 4, late at night, amid scenes of great rejoicing from the Belgians; and Ghent, the final objective, was reached the following day. Once in position there the results of the pursuit came quickly and within 24 hours the Regiment had captured 1,500 prisoners.

It had a particularly warm reception in Belgium, as it soon became known that King Leopold was its Colonel-in-Chief, and many were the toasts drunk to the "Regiment du Roi." After a short rest it



**IN CAMP AT FOLKESTONE, KENT.** Immediately prior to mobilization in 1939. The 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards were in France before the end of September. Armed with light tanks and Bren gun carriers at the outbreak of war, they experienced many changes of armament before being equipped with the latest Comet tanks in 1945. The Regiment joined the 7th Armoured Division in Normandy in July 1944; the offensive of Jan. 1945, which brought them to the Roer River, was the first British winter offensive in which an armoured division had taken a major part. PAGE 587

Records of the Regiments: 1939—1945



IN NORMANDY the 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards were engaged in very heavy fighting during July and August 1944. B Squadron is seen (left) formed up to attack across a sown field. Crews rested on the road to Villers Rosage (lower left).

placed under the command of the 53rd (Welsh) Division. The initial attack lasted for four days and was a great success. The town was captured and the major part of two German divisions was destroyed.

Then the Regiment reverted to its own Division and took part in clearing the southern bank of the River Maas as far west as the Dutch Islands. After a short period of training in Belgium it again went into the line, just before Christmas, north of Sittard. It was then on the extreme right of the British line, with the American 9th

Army as neighbours. Von Rundstedt's offensive against the Americans passed to the south and the Regiment was left unmolested.

The New Year brought with it a period of great cold and snow but, in spite of the weather, in the middle of January the Regiment took part in the limited British 2nd Army attack which cleared the Germans from the triangle formed by the rivers Maas and Roer and the British front line. Here, the Germans had had two months in which to lay minefields and construct anti-tank obstacles and it was realized that the advance would be slow. The attack was launched, and after 15 days' fighting, with the thermometer always showing 30 degrees of frost, the Regiment found itself on the banks of the river Roer, looking at the fixed defences of the vaunted Siegfried Line—and hearing therefrom at all too frequent intervals.

This was the first occasion that an armoured division had been asked to take a major part in a winter offensive, and the results had shown once more that the limitations by ground and weather are relative and not absolute in the employment of armour. The Regiment's tanks were impressive in their white paint as camouflage against snow.

The weather broke at the end of January and the Regiment was lucky in being able to extricate all the tanks when the order came to hand over to the Americans and go once more out of the line and into Belgium.



moved on again, and was soon in action to the west of Eindhoven at the start of the combined air and land offensive against Arnhem. The Regiment had the task here of clearing the main road between Eindhoven and Nijmegen after German counter-attacks had cut it. Here it first met and worked with elements of one of the American airborne divisions.

Great, however, as was the success gained, the final objective was never achieved. The bold plan having miscarried, it became necessary to build up the lines of communication and, particularly, to free Antwerp before the assault on Germany could be considered. The next major operation was the assault on 'S-Hertogenbosch. For this, the Regiment was



CROSSING THE SEINE the Regiment was engaged in the pursuit of the beaten German armies. With the 7th Armoured Division it covered the 250 miles from the river to Ghent in five days, crossing the Belgian frontier on Sept. 4, 1944. Having King Leopold as their Colonel-in-Chief, the Dragoons received a very warm welcome in Belgium and visited the mess of the 1st Gulde, the Belgian Household Cavalry. After a brief rest they were again in action, this time in the Netherlands, clearing the Eindhoven-Nijmegen road after the Germans had cut it. PAGE 588 War Office Photograph

## Inniskilling Dragoon Guards: Normandy Memories



RUINED AUNAY-SUR-ODON lay under a pall of dust (1) when the 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards advanced south-east of Caumont in August 1944. Tank crews will not quickly forget the blinding, choking dust of the Normandy roads; besides causing acute discomfort it betrayed their movements and increased the risk of shelling. German prisoners (2) were searched immediately to prevent the destruction of papers that might be of value to the Intelligence. Many German divisions had horse-drawn transport; at Bonneville troopers of the mechanized cavalry amused themselves with a captured cart (3).

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**UNDER FIRE**, two of the 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards plunge back through the mud to their tank near Gangel, in the Netherlands. The Regiment participated, in conjunction with the 53rd Division, in the capture of 'S-Hertogenbosch, completed on Oct. 27, 1944. War Office photograph

While the Americans and the 1st Canadian Army set out to drive the Germans from the west bank of the Rhine the Regiment had a breathing space to clean up and prepare for the last offensive, which all were waiting for—the assault over the Rhine and the pursuit through Germany. After a period of tense waiting the Regiment saw the Airborne Divisions fly over one sunny morning and it knew that the final round had started. The Regiment crossed the Rhine some 70 hours after the initial assault, in the early morning of March 27.

**T**HE 7th Armoured Division was the first armoured division to cross the river, and as leading regiment it was obvious that the 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards were in for a busy time. With the exception of certain S.S. and paratroop formations it was not expected that the bulk of the German Army would be capable of any organized resistance, and a quick break-out would entirely prevent the German High Command from any effective control of the battlefield. After passing quickly through the dropping

zones of the Airborne Divisions—an area covered with coloured parachutes, gliders and all the wreckage of battle—the Regiment passed through the leading elements of the 6th Airborne Division and took the lead.

An average of 12 miles a day was kept up for four days and nights of continuous fighting. Chief causes of delay were blown bridges and various isolated self-propelled guns and A.A. batteries that the Germans had not been able to withdraw. After an initial advance eastwards of some 25 miles the Regiment was directed north-east to reach the Dortmund-Ems canal in the area of Rheine. The latter was reached on the fourth day after crossing the Rhine, after many German self-propelled guns and more than 300 prisoners had been taken. This was the first phase of the final offensive, and the Regiment had been fighting its way forward over a distance of 89 miles continuously for four days and nights.

The general pattern of the Allied drive was now becoming clear. To the south of the British 2nd Army the Americans, after a

tremendous encircling movement in the Ruhr basin, were advancing rapidly against diminishing opposition, while on the Regiment's northern flank the Canadians and XXX Corps were fighting a hard but successful battle against a German paratroop army which was withdrawing slowly. The 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards, in the middle, so far had been lucky, and though it would be incorrect to say that no opposition had been encountered, it had never been determined. The beginning of April, however, brought the Regiment two days of very heavy fighting to secure a road leading through the plateau to the north of the Dortmund-Ems canal. Fanatical resistance was met from the cadets and N.C.Os. of the Hannover Infantry School, and in a fierce two days' battle the ridge was secured.

Once this nest of opposition had been crushed, resistance became less determined, and the Regiment drove on north-eastwards towards the River Weser. With the leading elements of the Division on the Weser, the Regiment was directed north towards Bremen in order to cut the escape routes of the German parachute army retreating before the Canadians. This was achieved in two days, in spite of an unexpected night attack on Regimental Headquarters—on the last night before the Regiment was relieved of its position. It then went on again, eastwards, over the rivers Weser and Aller.

**T**HE German Naval Headquarters at Buxtehude, on the Elbe, was captured, complete with its admiral and 400 German Wrens, who were far from pleased at finding that they were no longer considered to be of the Master Race. After much parley and discussion Hamburg surrendered and, with that surrender, to all intents and purposes the war in the British sector was over. Hamburg presented a spectacle that will be remembered for a long time by all who drove in that first day. The B.B.C.'s familiar announcement "Our aircraft bombed Hamburg last night" took on new significance on May 3—the ruins of Coventry, Southampton and London paled before the enormity of the damage over so wide an area.

The following day the Regiment marched to the Kiel Canal, where the news of the end of the war was heard on the wireless. It was lucky to finish up in a district of pleasant farmland completely unspoiled by war, where, apart from one short interlude, it has since remained. In the six years of war the Regiment earned five D.S.O.s, 11 M.C.s, seven D.C.M.s, 12 M.M.s, and two Croix-de-Guerre; and at the end of hostilities it had supplied from its pre-war officers one Corps Commander, three Brigadiers, and seven Lieutenant-Colonels commanding armoured regiments. Equipment varied from Bren Gun Carriers and Light Tanks, in 1939, through Stuarts, Covenanters, Crusaders, Shermans, Cromwells to Comets in 1945.

*(The Author gratefully acknowledges assistance with photographs by the Starquess of Kildarr)*



**ON THE KAISER WILHELM CANAL**, near Steinfeld, the Regiment seized three armed vessels in May 1945, one loaded with wireless sets looted by the Germans from Norway. Another "naval" engagement was the capture of the German Naval Headquarters at Buxtehude, on the Elbe, complete with 400 German Wrens, on April 22, 1945. PAGE 590 War Office photograph

## Our Last Display of Wartime Art



MAH SEARCHLIGHT ACROSS THE ENGLISH CHANNEL

Charles Pears

It is interesting to note that the Germans were very proud of this super-searchlight which threw its beam for a distance of 25 miles—from the French coast to the South Foreland. By its means they hoped to deter Allied shipping from passing through the Straits at night. But when they came to use it they discovered that its designers had neglected to take into account the earth's curvature and so, however low they depressed the beam, it struck the cliffs well above the height of any ships which slipped by in the dense shadow beneath.

FROM time to time, since they were first publicly exhibited at the National Gallery, London, and elsewhere, we have reproduced representative works of Britain's War Artists. Examples will be found on pp. 15-18 and 719-722, Vol. 7; and pp. 527-530, Vol. 9. Here we present a final selection from those displayed at the recently reopened Imperial War Museum. Among them are two paintings which, though executed during the war, are only now allowed to be seen. They are by Charles Pears (above) and Clive Upton (see p. 592).

### NAVAL AND MARINE P.O.W. ON THE MARCH Lieut. John Worsley

In John Worsley's painting (right), the column of P.O.W., marching ahead of the Allied advance in Germany between Bremen and Lübeck, is anxiously watching aircraft overhead to see if they are friend or foe; eventually the P.O.W. produced a home-made Union Jack which they displayed prominently so that the Allied airmen might not bomb them. The artist, taken prisoner when his ship was torpedoed, is on the extreme left.

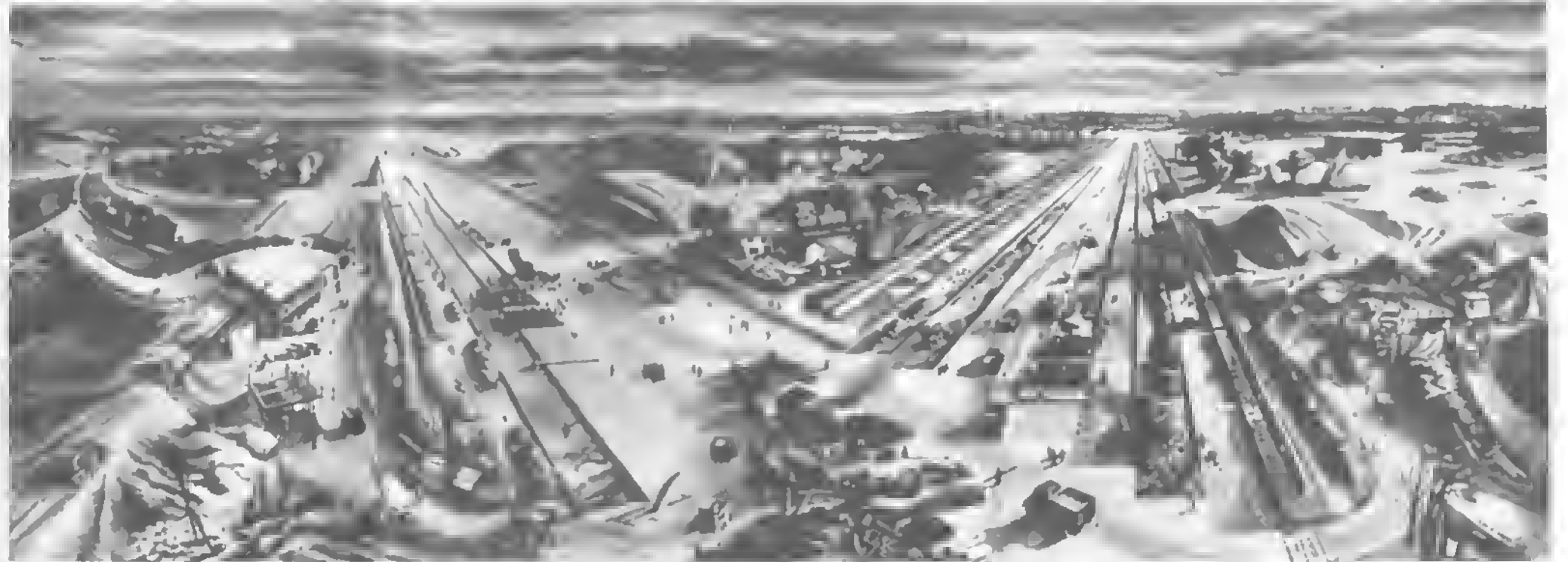
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LISTENING FOR TICRNG

Clive Upton



RUNWAY CONSTRUCTION

Alan Sorrell



ROCKET-FIRING TYPHOONS AT THE FALAISE GAP

Frank A Newton



FIELD-MARSHAL LORD WAVELL

Epstein



MAJOR J. W. RIDELL

John Rerry



GEN. SIR A. CUNNINGNAM

Epstein



A 'STICK' OF PARATROOPERS AT RINGWAY, 1943

W. Dring



SUBMARINE CONTROL ROOM DURING AN ATTACK

W. Dring





**WOMEN AT WORK  
ON AN ERECTED TANK**  
Ethel Gabain

**R.O.C. POST, COPYTHORNE, HANTS.  
CHIEF OBSERVER, D. H. B. HARFIELD;  
LEADING OBSERVER, J. O. ISSACS**  
William Dring



**BURMA—14th ARMY. THE BATTLE OF THE SITTANG BEND.  
MEN OF QUEEN'S OWN (R.W.K.) MAKE AN ARMED PATROL**  
Capt. Leslie Cole



# General Giffard's Claim to Fame

By Sir JAMES GRIGG

CONTEMPORARY reputations and judgements are chancy things, in no sphere more so than the military. The names of some generals very quickly become household words while others, who may have done as much as or more than the popular heroes, are never heard of. General Sir George Giffard made a great contribution to our victory, particularly in the Far East, yet he is perhaps the least known of all the British generals who held high command in the Second Great War.

I shall try to make clear what this contribution was, but I am afraid that for full justice Giffard will have to wait till the Official History appears, and by that time he will be beyond the reach of earthly praise.



11th ARMY GROUP

Giffard was commissioned in 1906. He spent more than half the time between then and 1939 with native troops in Africa. At the outbreak of war he was Military Secretary in the War Office, and to my knowledge an extremely good Military Secretary. A few months later he went to Palestine as G.O.C., and then, on the collapse of France, he was moved to West Africa. He knew more about Africa than any living soldier, and West Africa was now a vital staging area for our convoys round the Cape, and a source of indispensable raw materials.

## Fighting the "Powers of Darkness"

The French and British colonies there were so intermingled that it could easily become a plague centre for Vichy, and therefore for German intrigues. It was an essential link in the air route to Egypt, and from it we could, if necessary, develop land routes across Africa. In it also we could raise both fighting and labour units to relieve our manpower stringency. How important this region was can be gathered from the fact that it was later judged necessary to appoint a Resident Cabinet Minister for it. Shortly after his appointment the Minister went out of his way to send to the War Office the warmest of tributes to Giffard's work.

The Mediterranean was reopened in the spring of 1943 and the strategic importance of Africa decreased accordingly. And so when Field-Marshal Wavell asked for Giffard's services in the Far East it was found possible to release him. His new task was to take charge of the land forces based on India for operations outside India, with first priority for the recovery of Burma.

Certain lessons had been learned from the disasters in Malaya and the retreat in Burma in 1942. It was plain that neither British nor Indian troops would cope successfully with the Japanese in the jungle until some grave initial disadvantages had been removed. The standard equipment was too heavy for use against a lightly furnished and highly mobile enemy.

THEN there was the jungle hoodoo, which the Japs fostered by employing all sorts of noises and ruses to rattle troops who disliked fighting against what seemed to be the powers of darkness. And, perhaps most important of all, our men had to rid themselves of the idea that, once the Japanese had infiltrated behind our positions, there was nothing to do but to get back helter-skelter to some position where they could form an orthodox defence system again.

To evolve a complete outfit of tropical equipment would take time. To overcome

the hoodoo and to acquire a suitable jungle fighting technique meant new and concentrated training. After that it was necessary that the new equipment and the new technique should be successfully applied in battle before going all out for the reconquest of Burma and of the Malay Barrier. At the beginning of 1943 Wavell ordered certain minor-scale operations in Arakan. But they were not a success and more preparation was needed. Then it was that Wavell asked for Giffard.

ALL that summer the process of intensive training went on. Later in the year it was decided to set up a separate South-East Asia Command for all offensive operations based on India or Ceylon. It covered all three services and also the comparatively small American forces in the area whose role was to supply China, whether by air or by a reopened Burma Road. Lord Louis Mountbatten was appointed Supreme Commander, and the British Empire ground forces in his charge were formally constituted the 11th Army Group under Giffard.

The Group was to comprise initially the 14th Army under Slim for operations overland into Burma, and later another Army in addition for seaborne operations—probably against Rangoon in the first instance. S.E.A.C. Headquarters were at Kandy, the Army Group was in Delhi, while the 14th Army were near Calcutta. It was 1,500 miles from Kandy to Delhi, nearly 1,000 from Delhi to Calcutta and another 1,000 again by narrow-gauge railway or newly made mountain roads to the Assam-Burma frontier, where the troops were in contact with the Japanese.

The operations projected for the cold weather of 1943-44 consisted partly of a renewed southward thrust in Arakan, partly of a move over the mountains into and down the valley of the Chindwin, and partly of an airborne operation by Wingate's Long-Range Penetration troops behind the main Japanese positions. Complementary opera-

tions were to be undertaken under the American General Stilwell aimed at the capture of Myitkyina.

At Kandy, particularly from the Americans there, there was a good deal of criticism of both the limited scope and the slow progress of the land operations, and all kinds of suggestions for more spectacular action were forthcoming. Giffard had to resist these, first, because they were not administratively practicable in that country and over those distances, and second, because he felt that it would be wrong to plan too large until it had been demonstrated in actual battle that the 14th Army could play the Japanese at their own game and beat them. Once this had been done the troops, British, Indian and African, would have unbounded confidence in themselves.

Anyhow, Giffard's caution turned out to be wise. The Japanese were masters of infiltration, and the country was ideally suited for such tactics. In the southern part of the thousand-mile front they got behind the British positions and isolated the 7th Indian Division. This division immediately organized itself for all-round defence and stood to its ground. When it was possible the troops were victualled from the air, and when it was not they went on short rations. In the end it was the enemy who caved in, leaving the bulk of the original penetrating force dead either in battle or of starvation.

Japanese Morale in Burma Broken

So far so good, but an even greater task was at hand. The Japanese determined to strike in considerable strength through the mountains at Kohima and Imphal on the Assam borders. They broke through far enough to invest both places. Both had to be supplied by air. Kohima was the key to Imphal, and if Imphal fell our communications with the whole of the long Burma front would be cut, while the Japanese would be free to make forays into Bengal. And invaluable as was air transport for rationing or moving troops in an emergency, it was out of the question to make it the regular and normal means of supply.

However, both places held, and what had happened with the 7th Division at the Ngakyedauk Pass happened here on a much larger scale. Thousands of Japanese were killed in battle, thousands more of them died of starvation on their retreat, and it was now the Japanese in Burma whose morale was broken, while it was the British Empire forces who had acquired an unbeatable spirit.

Giffard had vindicated himself, and the way was now clear to speed up operations, in the secure knowledge that the troops would answer any call made upon them. The campaign was continued throughout the monsoon, and it ended only with the capture of Mandalay and Rangoon. But Giffard was not there to see the crown of his work. At the crisis when Kohima and Imphal were in hazard, Mountbatten told him that he no longer had confidence in him. Giffard accepted the judgement without complaint or comment, and left as soon as his replacement arrived several months later. But he did not leave until it was established beyond doubt that he and his work had been triumphantly vindicated. The work was, until after he left, unspectacular.

Giffard was, and is, an unspectacular man, but he and Slim did for our armies in the Far East what Alexander and Montgomery had done in the Desert. The dog had a tin can tied on to its tail. He looked as unlike a mastiff as it is possible to imagine. The tin can was removed, and the mastiff stood forth in his full and unbeatable magnificence.



General Sir GEORGE GIFFARD, G.C.B., D.S.O., whose unspectacular work hastened the day of victory in the Far East. From a sketch by Robin Guthrie

# Europe's Wartime Capitals in 1946

## MOSCOW

By J. CANG

IN 1947 the Russian people will celebrate the 800th anniversary of the founding of Moscow. From a mere collection of mud huts on the banks of the river Moskva in the 12th century it has become a great city and capital of the vast territory of the Soviets numbering 200 million people. Today Moscow is like a city reborn. Things that have not been seen there for years are beginning to appear in shop windows—crockery, samovars, toilet articles, toys, confectionery, wines and cigarettes—but at prices rarely within reach of the average man and woman.

What strikes the visitor most in Moscow now is the fact that the whole city seems to be dressing up; streets and buildings are encased in scaffolding and workmen are patching up, painting, plastering and building—to make it smart for its anniversary. The gilded and painted cupolas of churches and palaces have been cleaned of the grey camouflage paint which coated them during the war and now glitter as of old on Moscow's skyline. The great walls and towers of the Kremlin are being restored, the first time since 1866 that major repairs have been undertaken. Modern bricks being unsuitable to replace the ancient fabric, 600,000 bricks of special type are being made according to an old formula. The great ruby-coloured five-pointed stars which adorn the Kremlin towers have been remounted and shine more brightly than ever.

Unlike those of Napoleon, Hitler's armies never entered Moscow; although in 1941, while the bitter struggle raged almost outside its gates, preparations were made to burn the city to the ground—as the Muscovites did in 1812. Goering's bombers did get through and leave some marks, but compared with London bomb damage in the city was small and already it has been tidied up.

New building is going on at a great pace. Leading Russian architects have been assigned to plan the new Moscow and the blue-prints are prepared. Talk of the town is the striking model for the new "House of Books" designed by the famous Soviet architect Bogel to replace the historic 17th-century Pashkov Palace housing the Lenin library. Moscow will be the subject of another interesting experiment in Soviet town planning, a distinct feature of the new Russia. The town dwellers of the U.S.S.R. mostly live in flats, but small houses belong to a bygone era and are too reminiscent of the crowded, squalid villages of those days, and the severe climate of the northern cities makes large blocks of flats, centrally heated, a more practical type of home.

IN no country are so many cities being replanned and rebuilt as in the Soviet Union: Stalingrad, Sverdlovsk, Kiev, Leningrad, Minsk, Odessa, Sebastopol, Voronezh, were either destroyed or severely damaged by the Germans. Even cities that were untouched by the war are being rebuilt in accordance with modern planning ideas. But it is on the new Moscow that Russian pride is particularly concentrated. Muscovites will tell you that their city will soon be the largest in Europe, bigger than London, and perhaps have skyscrapers like New York. To them the skyscraper is the symbol of the modern age and technical perfection. A 16-storey block of flats is being erected on the river embankment, to be topped by a 300-foot tower; 18 storey blocks are envisaged,

The population of the city is estimated to be between four million and five million persons and expanding rapidly. It is believed it may double in the next ten years, for every day 300 children are born. In spite of the underground railway, street traffic is very congested. Moscow's trams are gradually being diverted from the centre of the city, where hundreds of new trolley-buses, painted sky-blue, have recently made their appearance. Also, a new traffic tunnel under the square before the railway station in Gorki Street—one of the busiest spots in Moscow—has recently been opened for the use of cars, trolley-buses and pedestrians (see facing page).



"PYGMALION" IN MOSCOW is played to crowded houses at the Maly Theatre. In addition to Shaw's play, productions of Shakespeare, Sheridan and Wilde, and a dramatization of *The Pickwick Papers*, are very popular. All the city's places of entertainment report record attendances, and new theatres are planned. Photo, Planet News

From a medieval, almost provincial, city in Tsarist days, Moscow has developed into a modern capital. Streets have been widened, straightened and paved; spacious blocks of offices and flats, as in other European cities, have become common. So determined are the Russians to expand and beautify their capital that they allow nothing to stand in the way. Old houses are pulled down, new ones which do not fit into an assigned scheme are promptly removed. Some quite extraordinary undertakings have been carried out in the shifting of whole houses, fully furnished as they stand, even with the inhabitants inside.

### Extraordinary House Removals

Every visitor to Moscow is taken to see Gorki Street; when this was widened to fit into the new Moscow plan it was necessary to shift nine big buildings, one weighing over 25,000 tons. One of them, a hospital, had to be turned around 97 degrees, and this was accomplished. During the process nothing inside was disturbed and doctors were able to go on performing operations.

This lifting of buildings from place to place seems to give Russians almost a childish delight, particularly if the inhabitants are persuaded to remain within and carry on with their ordinary tasks. Plumbers and electricians fix things up so that all the services continue to function; while the house is on the move people can even take baths or use the telephone. The feat is performed by

inserting a steel plate on rollers between the foundation and the building. These rollers are placed on rails and the house moved at the rate of 18 yards an hour, propelled by electric levers.

Among things the visitor misses in Moscow are restaurants and public houses. The only restaurants (as such) are in the big hotels inhabited by foreign diplomats, journalists and occasionally high Russian officials. Their prices are very steep. The workers, of course, have their own canteens and eat in their own homes. In blocks of flats the communal kitchen is being introduced; it is welcomed by Russian housewives, nearly all of whom work during the day in factories and offices. Food rationing is still in operation, but housewives supplement the family supplies wherever possible with goods bought from State shops and collective farm markets at the higher "commercial" prices.

Moscow is making plans to increase greatly its reputation as a cultural centre with new theatres, cinemas, a library, a picture gallery and a much enlarged university. More and more students flock to Moscow, attracted by the fame of its great scholars and scientists, so that the old university is almost bursting its sides. Always well patronized, Moscow's theatres have never known such overwhelming attendances as now. Every evening crowds besiege the box-offices in the slender hope of buying an odd ticket at the last moment. Plays by foreign authors now showing include Shaw's *Pygmalion*, Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*, Wilde's *Ideal Husband*, more than one Shakespearean production and a dramatization of *The Pickwick Papers*. Another very popular entertainment is the circus, where this winter audiences are welcoming back from the war survivors of a famous team of Don Cossack trick riders who joined up in the cavalry in 1941.

With the Pan-Slav ideal (the age-long Russian ambition to bring about a unity of all the Slav nations, such as Poles, Ukrainians, Czechoslovaks, Bulgars, and Yugoslavs under Russian patronage) becoming a reality, Moscow is something of a Mecca for the people of those countries. Here come their leaders for frequent consultation with Stalin in the Kremlin; here come their academicians, scientists, and engineers, to exchange ideas and learn of the latest Russian achievements. To Moscow, too, comes the youth of the Slavonic nations, to study at the military academy which Russians boast is the most up to date in the world.

The people of Moscow cannot be said to be keeping pace with their city in smartness. They are eating much better than during the war, but they are still woefully lacking in clothing. In the summer, girls managed to make themselves look almost smart with odd pieces of cotton cloth made up into loose blouses and full peasant skirts. But as the leaves of autumn began to fall and the first winds swept through the streets, the drab, worn coats and cloaks of last year (and many years before) began to cover up the summer cottons. Muscovite women tell you, however, that under the new Five Year Plan the textile mills are pouring out woollen cloth and soon there will be new coats for all; and Moscow will have no cause to be ashamed of its citizens. Already the reopening of shoe-repair shops, laundries and dry-cleaners, is helping in the smartening-up process.

## The Swiftly Changing Face of Post-War Moscow



TO EXPAND AND BEAUTIFY THE CAPITAL is one project on which Russia is concentrating. Some 20 years ago Goski Sesaat (1) was but a narrow, cobbled way. Now it is one of Moscow's busiest thoroughfares, and lurches architectural changes are planned; on the right is the Moskva Hotel, Moscow's largest. Arbat Station (2), on the city's underground railway. The wartime camouflage of grey paint has been removed from the Bolshoi Theatre (3), home of opera and ballet. See also facing page. PAGE 597 Photos, Pictorial Post



## Our Roving Camera Sees War Reparations Arrive



QUEEN ELIZABETH IN LONDON emerged from her wartime retirement in December 1946 when workmen removed the last of the bricks from the statue over the porch of St. Dunsten's-in-the-West, Fleet Street. The wall was built early in the war to protect the figure from damage during air raids.



ST. GEORGE'S MEMORIAL CHAPEL at Biggin Hill, Kent, was burned out in the early hours of Dec. 3, 1946, only the commemoration tablet remaining intact. The Operations Headquarters at the aerodrome will now become the memorial chapel and will incorporate all the features of the original edifice. See illus. pages 407-431.



AT LILLE, FRANCE, a memorial was unveiled on Dec. 1, 1946, to Capt. Michael Trotobas, who as Capitaine Michel has become an almost legendary hero of the French Resistance movement, and to his men who also lost their lives. The rat's head was the badge of the group, which was known as W.O. (War Office).



FIRST REPARATIONS FOR BRITAIN FROM GERMANY were landed at Tilbury Docks, Essex, in December 1946, consisting of secret drawing presses which enabled the Germans to substitute steel for brass in the manufacture of heavy cartridge cases. The machinery came from a Hamburg factory that escaped damage from the R.A.F.'s attacks during the war.



H.M.S. TRUANT, one of the most famous submarines of the Royal Navy, broke adrift from a tug on Dec. 5, 1946, while being towed to South Wales for breaking up, and grounded on the rocks of the Cherbourg Peninsula on Dec. 10, where she was found by the R.A.F. and a naval frigate. See also page 586.



## We Covered the Landings in Sicily

The invasion and capture of Sicily in August 1943 was acclaimed as the greatest combined amphibian attack carried out up to that date by any nation. The part of H.M.S. Mauritius in the initial and final assaults is outlined by ex-Petty Officer C. E. Curtis, then serving in that cruiser.

We left Malta at 8.30 a.m. on July 9, 1943, for an unknown destination, in company with the cruisers Orion, Uganda, Aurora, and destroyer screens. Thirty minutes after sailing a broadcast speech by Captain W. E. Davis informed the ship's company of the impending operation and asked all hands to stand by for immediate action stations. Enormous convoys of tank and troop landing craft were steaming north-east in a smooth sea; we could just see the battle fleet, consisting of battleships and aircraft carriers.

At noon we took over a convoy of 20 transports and about 50 landing craft carrying two full divisions and equipment. Shortly afterwards we passed 60 large ships carrying two more full divisions and tanks. The whole convoy, now spread out over more than 1,000 miles of sea, made a very impressive sight. Towards evening the weather began to get rough, and the small troop transports and tank landing craft were making heavy going of it, but as Sicily came in sight, with Mount Etna prominent against the setting sun, we engaged in a last check-up on our guns and communications.

At 10.45 p.m. our glider towing planes passed overhead with the Airborne divisions—to drop behind the enemy lines, destroy communications and prevent the destruction of bridges that would be useful to us. They were soon detected, and an enormous amount of flak started going up from Italian positions round Syracuse, which our bombers were pounding to cover glider landings and smother gun-fire as the convoys approached.

All ships stopped two miles off Avalon beaches. Heavy bombs were falling over Syracuse, whole groups of houses appeared to be going up, and many oil fires were burning in the harbour area. The sky was a mass of coloured tracer as the Italians frantically tried to beat off our aircraft. But no one appeared to be looking our way yet—it seemed incredible that we should have some 4,000 ships only 500 yards off an enemy coast still undiscovered.

At 1.40 a.m. on July 10 the troops entered the barges, and soon the sea was black with boatloads making for the shore. They landed undetected. All enemy positions had apparently been put out of action by our Commandos, and our men moving off inland met only slight opposition. The Americans, however, seemed to be meeting with stiff resistance in their sector, to the south, for we

could hear a very heavy naval bombardment going on in that direction.

Two signals from shore at 4.55 indicated that our 1st and 2nd Brigade landings had been successful. As it began to get light we heard cries for help all round, and found many survivors from the airborne divisions whose gliders had fallen short into the sea. Destroyers and small craft now steamed in to bombard enemy guns which had begun shelling our landing craft taking in stores. These guns were firing from concealed positions above Syracuse, and many shells were falling among our beach areas. We opened fire with our 6-in. guns, and soon all our warships were bombarding. Shells could be seen bursting all along the road crowded with the retreating garrison from Syracuse, where, by 8 a.m., all organized resistance appeared to have ceased.

### Hospital Ship Bombed and Sunk

Later that morning we had our first sight of enemy aircraft, when Stukas came into action. All ships opened up with full A.A. fire, and the bombs fell wide. Tip and run raids by single F.W. 190s and Ju 88s continued during the afternoon, and we had some near misses. In the evening we were subjected to continuous dive-bombing by groups of eight to ten F.W. 190s. From three very near misses with 500-pounders a hail of splinters hit us, and two ratings and one officer were slightly wounded.

We saw German dive-bombers attack the hospital ship Talamba, with wounded on board, although she was fully lit-up with

red crosses and the usual neutral markings. A direct hit was scored on the operation rooms and wards, and as the Talamba sank fast by the stern, her lights dimming, we could hear the cries of the drowning nurses and cot cases. She went down inside a quarter-hour. The air attacks on our shipping went on incessantly all night, and the ships' A.A. guns were in action from 10 p.m. till 4.30 a.m.

By the early morning of July 11 all Syracuse and its surroundings were in Allied hands, and enemy airfields were being reconstructed for Allied use. In the afternoon, lying off the naval base of Augusta, we began a 6-in. gun bombardment of German shore batteries. Allied dive-bombers joined in, and large oil fires were started. That night, more airborne troops passed over to drop behind the German lines in gliders. In the morning the monitor Erebus began a 15-in. gun bombardment of German shore positions in the van of advancing 8th Army units. The enemy retaliated with dive-bomber attacks, but caused no damage, and Erebus continued to bombard at a range of 15 miles. An Italian submarine, after being depth-charged, surfaced and surrendered, and was towed away by a trawler to Syracuse.

At 7 in the evening a large transport of storm troops arrived, and destroyers closed range, bombarding gun batteries round the dock areas of Port Augusta in preparation for a landing. Beach parties were away an hour later, and were soon fighting in the streets. The town was captured intact that night, with the seaplane base, naval barracks and oil fuelling equipment.

The next morning, assisted by Erebus and the cruiser Uganda, we began to bombard Lentini, to dislodge Germans who were dug in on the hills. Four very heavy shells which straddled the Mauritius appeared to come from railway guns some 12 miles away. A signal



P.O. C. E. CURTIS



H.M.S. MAURITIUS, with main armament of twelve 6-in. guns, bombarded enemy positions near the Sicily beaches and later engaged targets farther inland to soften up the resistance. The author of this story was serving in this 8,000-ton cruiser when she was subjected to continuous bombing and shelled by railway guns.

## I Was There!

from shore at 11.25 a.m. announced that Lentini had been captured by 8th Army units, who were advancing on to Gerhina airfield and towards Catania. While we and the Newfoundland were bombarding the retreating German 15th Panzer Division on the coast road, another salvo of four heavy shells just missed my ship (I actually felt them pass our bridge), but we could not spot the guns.

On July 14 we and the Newfoundland proceeded to Malta for fuelling and ammunition. There, too, we had a visitation from enemy aircraft, in spite of a very heavy barrage, and Mauritius again had a couple of near misses. After two days we left Valletta Grand Harbour, and sighted part of the main battle fleet—Rodney, Nelson, Formidable, and a destroyer screen—returning from an unsuccessful search for the Italian battle fleet.

### Ammunition Ship 'Torpello' Blown Up

In the afternoon we closed range to two miles, when both our own lines and the enemy's were in plain sight. We began shelling the Hermann-Goering armoured division, our shells bursting neatly among the Germans. Many tanks were burning on the roads, and after an hour we ceased as the dust from our shells obscured the German lines. In the evening we bombarded a chemical works in the Catania dock area; after four salvos the walls of the factory fell in and large explosions occurred. We then turned south and returned to Augusta, anchoring at 9 p.m. From midnight till 3.30 a.m. there were continuous heavy enemy bombing attacks. It was estimated that 200 enemy planes were over the area, and 15 were shot down. Meanwhile, the Warspite and other heavy ships bombarded Catania with 15-in. guns, causing enormous damage and starting big fires among enemy supply dumps.

By July 17 more than one-third of Sicily was in Allied hands, and the total number of prisoners (mostly Italians) amounted to more than 35,000. The Germans were still trying to bring in fresh troops across the Messina Straits under continual Allied air attack. During the night there were further German air attacks on Augusta and the harbour area, and our A.A. fire was kept up continuously. Enormous numbers of shells were used; we fired 1,600 pom-pom, 6,000 Oerlikon and 314 4-in. shells. The next day two more transports arrived, one of them bringing 25 Greek nurses to serve in the front line.

At 4 a.m. on July 19 a dive-bomber attack made a direct hit on the ammunition ship

Torpello. There was a tremendous explosion and shells and burning debris were thrown all over the harbour, the smoke rising to two miles. The few survivors picked up from the wreck were cared for in our sick-bay. That morning we and the Dutch sloop Flores proceeded out of Augusta towards Catania to assist our forward troops. Meanwhile, Flying Fortresses were bombing the German positions from four miles up. As we were being heavily shelled by German shore batteries and tanks (I counted up to 40 near misses), we closed range to one mile and opened up full 6-in. and 4-in. fire at the enemy gun flashes—and the Germans ceased firing. All the afternoon we bombarded selected targets as requested by the Army on shore, until 7.30 p.m., when we ceased fire and returned to Augusta to anchor.

That night there were heavy air attacks on the anchorage by bombers using groups of flares. Two direct hits were scored on an ammunition ship, which blew up, leaving no survivors. All our ships put up a full barrage, and not until the All Clear came at 4 a.m. did the guns' crews relax. Large reinforcements of heavy tanks had reached our troops. The Canadians closing in to the north-west were threatening to outflank the Germans in the Catania salient. More than half Sicily was now in Allied hands, the prisoners totalling 41,000, but crack units of the Hermann-Goering division were holding good positions all round the lower slopes of Mount Etna and appeared well supplied.

In the morning of July 21, accompanied by destroyers, we left to attempt to spot concealed German guns which were shelling the harbour area. Heavy shells from these hidden guns fell round us but caused no damage. Large ammunition dumps were blowing up, where the Germans were apparently destroying all their heavy equipment. Unsuccessful in spotting and destroying the concealed guns, which were reported to be in railway tunnels, we returned to Augusta.

On July 22 we and the Newfoundland again left Sicily for Malta, for fuel, repairs and ammunition, and while there we heard the dramatic news of the resignation of Mussolini, on July 25. Returning to Augusta, we found the 8th Army slowly advancing against stiff opposition from crack German troops who were slowly being driven from every strong-point. The firebus assisted by bombarding, with 15-in. turret guns, the enemy dug in on the lower slopes of Mount Etna. August 5 found large fires and explosions taking place in the German lines, where they appeared to be destroying their heavy dumps prior to withdrawing northwards to avoid a threatened Allied pincer movement.

The coastal roads leading out of Catania were packed with masses of German tanks when we commenced a bombardment of the cross-roads. During the morning reports showed that our troops were in Catania at last. Paterno, the

H.M.S. WARSPITE hurled shells from her 15-in. guns at German positions in the Catania area in July 1943, causing tremendous damage and destroying vast quantities of enemy supplies of all kinds. Admiralty photograph.

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Colours: Pale blue Pegasus on maroon

### 6TH AIRBORNE DIVISION

The badge of this formation is the same as that of the 1st Airborne Division—Bellerophon astride Pegasus. The 6th Division was formed in May 1943 and placed under the command of Major-General R. N. Gale, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C. It was trained and equipped to play an important part in the invasion of Europe, its task being to cover the left flank of the British Army on the Orne. The first landings, by gliders and parachute troops, were made in Normandy in the early hours of June 6, 1944, the bridges over the Orne and Orne Canal being speedily captured.

The swing-bridge at Bénouville has been renamed Pegasus Bridge in recognition of the gallantry of the airborne troops. Units which were to have relieved the Division became absorbed in the heavy fighting around Caen, and the 6th remained continuously engaged for more than two months. From August 17, 1944, onwards, it advanced steadily eastwards, finally reaching Honfleur.

It was a seriously depleted formation that returned to England to rest and reorganize during the next few months. In December the Division was fighting in the Ardennes under the command of Major-General E. Bols, having been thrust into the western tip of the Ardennes salient. It returned to England early in the New Year, and was dropped east of the Rhine on March 24, 1945, landing to seize the crossings of the River Issel and the important railway running from Wesel to Bocholt.

All the objectives had been taken by the following afternoon, and the next morning a firm junction was made with the British forces advancing from the Rhine. The Division then took part in the advance across Germany, reaching the Baltic Sea and having linked up with Russian troops at Wisnar before the unconditional surrender of Germany. The formation remained in Germany until the autumn of 1945, when it was transferred to Palestine.

junction of the German supply lines from the north, was entered and occupied by the 51st (Highland) Division later in the day.

On the morning of August 7, proceeding north past Catania, we saw groups of German tanks jammed on the roads outside Riposto; we opened a full 6-in. bombardment, and many flew up. Four shells from long-range 88-mm. guns just missed our stern. At noon a signal from our troops attacking Riposto said that their advance was held up by German mortar fire. The Mauritius accordingly bombarded the German mortar batteries from close range until destroyed them.

The enemy were still holding out on the lower slopes of Mount Etna on August 8, but observation was difficult owing to the rain of shells and bombs. That night and the following night ships in Augusta harbour were again the target of air raids by Ju 88s using chandelier flares, and all the A.A. guns were





## I Was There!

in continuous action. On August 10 we proceeded north with a destroyer screen to shut up the Germans retreating towards Messina. Observing columns of motor transport moving along the road north of Riposto we opened fire. Later we closed in to bombard coastal forts and houses where the Germans were using concealed mortars.

During the next day or two we heard of Allied bomber raids on Milan and Turin, also that Rome had been declared an open city. On Sicily the Germans were retreating in disorder towards Messina, abandoning

large stores of equipment. Remnants of their forces were still trying to escape across the Straits. R.A.F. aircraft flying through intense A.A. fire were strafing and bombing barges and many hundreds of Germans were drowned. Our men made successful Commando raids on Reggio Calabria in the toe of Italy—our next objective. By August 16 Allied troops were entering the outskirts of Messina—last Sicilian port in German hands—and stragglers were being surrounded and mopped up. So the curtain fell on this most brilliant and successful 38-days campaign.

other oases—Faiyum, Jalo, Zella, and Siwa where the best dates in Africa are grown. It was necessary to explore almost untraversed country for knowledge vital to future large-scale military operations. Perhaps the most important duty of all was the maintenance of the Roat! Watch, which was continued day and night for many months on end. The object was to obtain a census of all the enemy tanks, guns, supply lorries and troops passing to or from the enemy front lines.

A patrol would undertake this exacting duty for two or three weeks, then be relieved by another patrol. Trucks were parked, and two men would go forward under cover of darkness and lie among low scrub from 50 to 200 yards from the main coastal road, the Via Balbia. There they remained doggo all day until nightfall, hardly daring to move, except to jot down in a notebook an account of every single thing that passed by. Well I recall the occasion when on this Roat! Watch we were encamped near the Arc Philaenorum—familiar to our Army as the Marble Arch—engraved with the portrait and inscription in Latin of Benito Mussolini. Our lorries were parked and camouflaged in a wadi, and two fellows crawled up as near to the road as was consistent with security. While some others played cards, I squatted beside my truck with headphones adjusted, transmitting information to Group Headquarters periodically and fingering the frequency dials while trying to decipher faint signals coming over the ether.

### Our Men Prepared to Shoot It Out

We looked a rough lot. Some of the fellows were bearded, and stripped to the waist. Most of us wore the Arab headdress and Indian sandals which were part of our regulation kit. Around us was thorny scrub, and myriads of flies tormented us during that long, hot day in the late spring of 1942, months before the battle of Alamcin was fought and won. Traffic along the road was not considerable. Presently, towards evening, a lone motor-car of the touring type came along, and to our dismay halted only a few yards from where our two watchers were lying. An Italian officer stood upright in it and began to survey the ground through field-glasses. Our men prepared to shoot it out, almost certain of discovery. Then along the coastal road came a great convoy of armoured cars, guns and trucks—300 of them. The Italian officer, unaware of our

## Our Badge Was the Venomous Scorpion

Among remarkable enterprises of the war were the formation and exploits in N. Africa of the Long Range Desert Group. Consisting of only about 200 hand-picked officers and men, all volunteers and some of them well-known explorers and scientists, the L.R.D.G. aided in brilliant 8th Army successes. Cpl. Arthur Biddle recalls experiences whilst serving with them.

I HAD no idea when I went to the Middle East as a member of the Royal Signals in 1940 that I was destined for nomadic desert adventures. The opportunity occurred when I volunteered for special duty and gained a transfer to the newly formed Long Range Desert Group, whose first commander was Lieut.-Col. Ralph A. Bagnold.

Primed with youthful confidence, it seemed a waste of time for me to have to take a few weeks' course in wireless telegraphy. But I found a lot more to learn for specialized desert work, including transmission and reception of messages on a radio set designed to cover 20 miles, and which in practice would have to be used up to 1,000 miles despite weird atmospheric conditions. Signalling, it was considered, was the most important function of the desert patrols, for without regular contact the enterprise would fail in its main object—which was reconnaissance. Secondary objects of the newly formed force were hit-and-run raids on the Germans and Italians, the hampering of rail and road communications, capture of prisoners for interrogation, and conveyance of secret agents and other specialists to areas far behind the enemy lines.



Cpl. A. BIDDLE

thirst, and of others who survived by miraculous endurance after tramping incredible distances. Some of the escapes were due to a chain of supply dumps that gradually were installed in the desert at 25-mile intervals en route to the oases.

In summer we had to combat heat up to 120 degrees in the shade, and in winter a temperature that fell below freezing point at night. Our trucks regularly crossed the untrodden zones of the desert known as the Sand Seas—one with an area as large as Wales—where the sand was hundreds of feet deep and lay in waves beautiful to see in the dawn and early evening. But this part of the desert was almost as treacherous as the salt-marshes. Truck driving was a specialized art when the sun was high and there were no shadows to give warning of undulations. A sudden descent from a low dune, and wheels might become stuck in soft sand to the axles. Then we toiled, sweated and swore, while we adopted all the regulation devices for "unsticking." Occasionally, in particularly bad going, we could look back a couple of miles at supper-time and see the ration tins at the spot where we had breakfasted before setting out in the morning!

Our desert bases varied during the course of the North African campaign in relation to the ebb and flow of the main fighting. When Colonel (afterwards General) Leclerc, in command of the Free French Force from the Chad Province, seized Kufra in the south from the Italian garrison we used this oasis. At different times we were based on

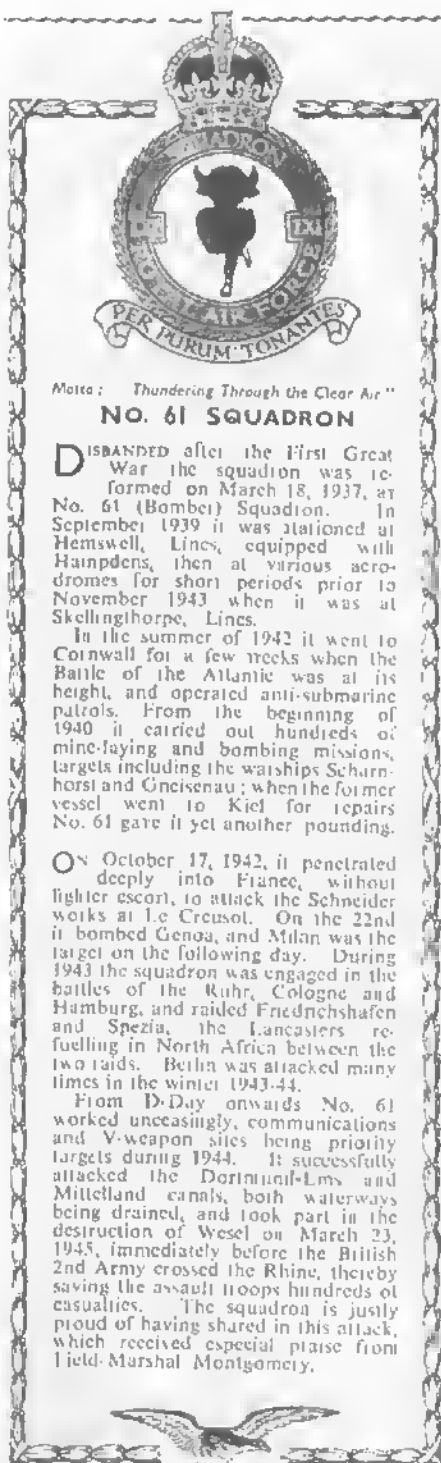
### It was "A Quartermaster's Hell"

The patrols consisted of Guards, New Zealanders, Rhodesians, Indians, and the Yeomanry. I was attached to the N-Zedders throughout the campaign. Our means of transport were Chevrolets and jeeps mounted with machine-guns and Bofors, and equipped with sand-tires ten inches wide. Among our gear were sun-compasses and Log. Tables for navigation over the Libyan Desert (which is nearly as large as India), spades, sand-mats and perforated metal sand-channels for "unsticking" vehicles bogged in soft sand or the treacherous salt marshes of the Great Depression.

Our operations were over that vast area which General von Ravenstein declared was "a tactician's paradise and a quartermaster's hell." Supplies were a knotty problem, and often a few cars went into the blue on routine patrol over distances that would have necessitated the preparation of a major expedition in pie wat days. Our greatest peril was from enemy aircraft, and sometimes trucks were bombed into scrap-iron. There are grim records of L.R.D.G. men, deprived of transport wandering in the scorching desert until rescued by heat and



TRANSMITTED TO HEADQUARTERS BY WIRELESS, information secured by the Long Range Desert Group in their incursions deep into enemy territory could have been gathered in no other way (though for fear of revealing a patrol's position the smallest possible use was made of the radio car. The author of this story is seen adjusting his set. PAGE 803



Motto: "Thundering Through the Clear Air"  
**NO. 61 SQUADRON**

**D**ISBANDED after the First Great War the squadron was re-formed on March 18, 1937, as No. 61 (Bomber) Squadron. In September 1939 it was stationed at Hemswell, Lincs, equipped with Hampdens, then at various aerodromes for short periods prior to November 1943 when it was at Skellingthorpe, Lincs.

In the summer of 1942 it went to Cornwall for a few weeks when the Battle of the Atlantic was at its height, and operated anti-submarine patrols. From the beginning of 1940 it carried out hundreds of mine-laying and bombing missions, targets including the warships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau; when the former vessel went to Kiel for repairs No. 61 gave it yet another pounding.

**O**n October 17, 1942, it penetrated deeply into France, without fighter escort, to attack the Schneider works at Le Creusot. On the 22nd it bombed Genoa, and Milan was the target on the following day. During 1943 the squadron was engaged in the battles of the Ruhr, Cologne and Hamburg, and raided Friedrichshafen and Spezia, the Lancasters refuelling in North Africa between the two raids. Berlin was attacked many times in the winter 1943-44.

From D-Day onwards No. 61 worked unceasingly, communications and V-weapons sites being priority targets during 1944. It successfully attacked the Dortmund-Lms and Mittelland canals, both waterways being drained, and took part in the destruction of Wesel on March 23, 1945, immediately before the British 2nd Army crossed the Rhine, thereby saving the assault troops hundreds of casualties. The squadron is justly proud of having shared in this attack, which received especial praise from Field-Marshal Montgomery.

presence, made a hand signal indicating that he had selected a suitable parking area for the night. Our nerves were on edge as those vehicles deployed from the road, surrounding us and cutting off the retreat from the wadi of the two L.R.D.G. watchers. For ten hours or more the situation was tense. Yet neither the trucks nor any of us were seen, and at first light the convoy departed without knowing that British troops had been lying within their encampment. Nor, perhaps, would they have credited that any British unit could have gained a position nearly 500 miles behind their own front lines without being intercepted.

Amazing though it may appear, neither the Germans nor Italians knew during the whole North African campaign that an almost continual watch was kept on their traffic along the Via Balbia. Little imagination is needed to realize the importance to General

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Montgomery of the information collected and radioed of enemy numbers and movements when it came to making vital decisions of strategy and tactics.

By good luck I was at the Desert Group's most successful "beat-up" of the enemy—the raid on Barce, beyond Benghazi, 600 miles behind the lines. The raid took place more than a month before Alamein was fought, and the L.R.D.G. was then under the command of Lieut.-Col. G. L. Prendergast, D.S.O. There was a good deal of "hush-hush" about the preparations. All that the rank-and-file like myself could surmise was that there was something unusual in the wind when our patrol set out from our base at Kufra. Actually, we were bound on a dare-devil mission to enter Barce in Cyrenaica and near the Mediterranean coast, and other mobile units were also engaged in crossing the great desert to rendezvous with us and take part in a brilliantly planned enterprise.



We learned this after crossing some hundreds of miles of sand. Afterwards, in the light of events, our deduction was that the secret must have leaked, with the consequence that 2,000 German troops reinforced the Italians in Barce shortly before our visit. Our lightly-armed trucks and jeeps moved up stealthily from the south and converged on the enemy-occupied town and airfield. The patrol with which I was serving halted within striking distance, but well out of sight of the objectives, and there ensued the inevitable nerve-racking waiting. Fortunately, no Arab nomads who saw the patrols recognized the nature of them, and when an Italian motorized unit happened to pass one patrol the hand-waving of our men was answered by an equally "friendly" greeting from the unsuspecting foe.

The sun dipped below the rim of the scrub ... sputtered waste and the pink after-glow faded. Night brooded silently over the desert, and at nine o'clock we moved northward through the warm darkness, thankful that the waiting was over. Everyone detailed for the raid had been placed in his particular task, and we drove hard for Barce confident of catching the Italians on the hop. The late Major Jake Easonsmith, D.S.O., halted his car at a crossroads and from there dispatched the various patrols. My truck

stopped, as arranged, near the perimeter, and I opened fire with the Vickers .5 as the "party" started up full blast. The target was a number of Italians who had suddenly appeared and made a dash for cover, firing wildly as they went. Meantime, the commander of one patrol, Captain N. P. Wilder, D.S.O., led his New Zealanders for the attack on the airfield. He forced the gate open and the trucks roared in, the light guns flaming as some of the enemy ground staff made their appearance.

### Lively Lone Wolf Act in a Jeep

Those of us, like myself, who had the job of covering the attack put in some shooting practice whenever targets appeared, and at intervals got off a few bursts at some of the buildings to deter any lurking enemies. The N.Z. Zedders roared over the airfield, their guns drilling incendiaries into the petrol tanks of the aircraft ranged on the ground. One after another the machines caught fire, and when a petrol lorry flared up the whole town was illuminated. Delayed action bombs were used to destroy aircraft which failed to blaze from the impact of the incendiaries. Grenades carried by some of our L.R.D.G. men were flung into mess buildings, sleeping quarters and hangars. While this was going on, the desert patrol of the Guards went charging through the town to assault the barracks and keep the Germans and Italians too busy there to intervene at the aerodrome. While the attack lasted, the brilliant Jake Easonsmith in his jeep performed a kind of lone wolf act among the Barce buildings, chasing any enemy troops he saw and generally creating confusion with his Mills bombs.

The job was done; then came the tricky task of extricating ourselves. As on almost every stunt in which the L.R.D.G. took part we were greatly outnumbered, and we did not get off scot-free. Some trucks were lost and several of our men were taken prisoner. But we picked up others who had no means of transport except their own legs, and also rescued the wounded where possible. There was a great hue-and-cry for us, and we were ambushed with some losses and later bombed from the air. We lost 14 vehicles in all. Our six wounded, who were rescued, recovered in time, and ten prisoners remained in enemy hands. I have never heard how many casualties the enemy suffered in that Barce raid, but it is known that we destroyed over 30 of their aircraft, which meant the saving of many British lives when it came to the great trial of strength at Alamein.

### I Fought the Germans Underground

A Professor of English in Belgium when war broke out in 1939, Mr. G. P. O'Sullivan remained there throughout the long Occupation, uplifting the morale of the people and, at the ever-present risk of detection by the Gestapo, assisting in the anti-Nazi campaign by every means in his power.

**A**LWAYS in civilian clothes, the dreaded Gestapo followed immediately in the wake of the advancing German armies. Already the ground for their dastardly work had been prepared by members of the Flemish National Movement—anti-Ally and, in particular, anti-English. These had got to know many of the patriots during the "phony" war period up to May 1940, and when the Gestapo began functioning in a commandeered private house in the Avenue de la Faille (a name we shuddered to hear) they had a list of names prepared by those members—many of whom, since the Liberation, I am glad to say have been condemned to death or sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

The Germans employed hirelings to frequent cafés for the purpose of checking-up the pro-Ally customers and proprietors.

And though we were pretty keen at the same game it took us nearly two years to know for certain the patriotic cafés from the pro-German ones. As we identified more and more members of the Gestapo we passed on the information—always on our guard against the many "doubtful" cars.

### At the Hour We Learned to Fear

The Gestapo system of arrest was as follows. A number of them would arrive by car at the house of a listed victim at three in the morning—an hour we learned to fear. They were fairly certain of finding the wanted one at home then, because of the curfew from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. If no reply came to their bell-ringing or knocking they forced the door, and if the wanted person was there he or she was straightway hauled into the car and taken to the headquarters in the Avenue de la Faille for interrogation.

## Watchers and Watched in the Western Desert



ALONG A DESERT ROAD in North Africa enemy transport moved (1) unaware of the close watch kept upon it by a two-man patrol (2) of the Long Range Desert Group — that hand-picked collection of specialists whose individual efforts meant so much to the valorous 8th Army. Equipped with all necessary paraphernalia, including field-glasses, notebooks, and photographs of enemy transport and armoured vehicles for recognition purposes, the road-watcher—post-masters in the art of camouflage and concealment—supplied British Intelligence with prompt data as to movements, numbers and types.

The road from Tripoli to Cyrenaica was the main German supply route by which tanks and reinforcements were dispatched to the front, and the L.R.D.G. kept it under close observation. Sometimes their information would be secured and sent back from an area as much as 400 miles behind the enemy's lines. Once in hostile territory a patrol (3) depended for its continued existence on unflagging vigilance, maintaining a never-releasing watch on the skies as well as the ground. See story in facing page.

War Office photograph

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The questioning started on a polite note, with a promise of immediate release if guilt were admitted or the information (such as a list of friends) asked for were given. If that method of approach failed, the beast in the Gestapo make-up was let loose and the victim would be battered black and blue. Several I saw after their release (which was only temporary), and I still shudder when I think of what might have happened if the Gestapo had arrived in England. Often I heard the thugs gloating in anticipation of "getting at" the "Engelsche Schweinhunden," and my blood boiled.



G. P. O'SULLIVAN

If the victims gave no information (and many did not however terrible their ordeal) they were transported to a hell-camp at Breendonck, near Antwerp—a disused fort surrounded by water, where atrocities worse than those at Belsen or Dachau in Germany took place. Bodies were still being found at Breendonck in June 1946 of persons arrested by the Gestapo and never again heard of alive. There, patriots under interrogation were hung by an arm for hours. There was also an electric glove in which locked hands were thrust until, in unbearable agony, the helpless victims gave themselves (and others) away.

### Our Secret Camp in the Ardennes

It sometimes happened that the Gestapo failed to find a victim at home. Other members of the family, or inmates of the house, would then be arrested and kept in prison for weeks. When we learned that the Gestapo had visited a certain house and found their intended victim not at home we immediately contacted him and smuggled him away to a patriotic camp at Bievres, in the heart of the thickly wooded Ardennes.

More than 40,000 "wanted" men were in hiding there, some of them for years. They slept on tarpaulins stolen from the railways, under tarpaulin roofs to guard

against detection by German aircraft. They could not, with safety, have fires in winter, and their hardships could not be measured. To prevent treachery, no one was allowed to leave that secret camp once he had been admitted. We provided them with food obtained with our own coupons, or stolen ones (thousands of them were "lifted" every month for a patriotic end) or those which we printed ourselves.

The Germans suspected there were men hiding in the Ardennes, but they did not dream the camp was so well organized—and they did not take the risk of going into the forest to search for the missing. When the enemy was retreating in 1944 through the Ardennes to their "Heimat" (Homeland) these men, all well armed, attacked them in the rear and thus helped, with the utmost joy, to demoralize an army already sick of the war. Jews were hidden in Christian houses

from 1942 onwards (to avoid deportation), but some were denounced by Belgian traitors. Then followed arrest and a beating-up, and the unlucky patriots concerned were thrown into prison.

Listening to B.B.C. broadcasts was a crime against the German Army, and hundreds of Belgians were arrested for it. But daily for four long years I listened-in and never once missed passing on the war communiqué to patriots, who spread the news far and wide "underground." One trick the civilian-garbed Gestapo had for the detection of patriots was in the offering of revolvers for sale (possession of arms was punishable by death). Posing as patriotic Belgians these devilish salesmen found many victims. Do you wonder we were careful of every word we uttered, that we learned to smell-out the Gestapo and their hirelings and hate their very shadows during those terror-years?

## We Were Crippled 800 Miles From Land

In convoy one placid day early in 1942 the motor vessel G. S. Walden, 21,000-ton tanker, ran into big trouble. There came the unexpected "boll from the blue" and her engine-room became an inferno of scalding steam. This recollection is by T. C. Skeats, one of the ship's officers.

MY watch over, I retired to my cabin for a read and smoke before turning in for the night. The weather had been calm and sunny, and I was in peaceful mood and unprepared for the sudden, ear-shattering explosion, which was followed almost immediately by another. The ship shook from stem to stern.

I leaped out of my bunk and flicked the electric light switch, with no result. In a twinkling I flung open the port, and was met by clouds of hissing steam and showers of sparks from the funnel. My brain registered swiftly, "We've been torpedoed in the engine-room!" There sounded the clattering feet of running men, and groping about in the darkness I managed to pull on some clothing. A fellow officer appeared, heavy with sleep and worrying about the gyro compass because the "juice" was off. "We've been bumped!" I told him and he dashed to his room for his gear with never another thought for the compass! In a few lightning movements I was up on to the bridge, to check up on the situation.

I saw a succession of sputtering rockets and whizzing flares speeding into the night

sky and lighting the scene with a wan and ghostly luminance. Orders were shouted, and the lifeboats were swung out for lowering, while all around ships careered in all directions as the convoy scattered, finwise. Peering along aft, I could see that our stern was settling as the sea rapidly poured into the engine-room. Preparations for a trip in the boats went on apace, with each man, anxiously but efficiently, carrying out his duties. Several firemen, severely scalded by escaping steam, were receiving first-aid on the boat deck. The action of the bitterly cold night air on their overheated bodies raised their skin to peel off in huge pieces, and their suffering was indescribable.

A roll call revealed that three men were missing. A search was conducted and we found two of the absent members, badly injured but still fighting for life. The missing man was a young engineer, and our continued search for him was of no avail. Suddenly a dim shape out at sea appeared silhouetted against the light of a star shell. Snatching a torch I sent a signal in its direction, thinking it was a corvette. My signal was answered, and I felt relieved. A few seconds later I was astounded to see the black shape materialize into the sleek lines of a large enemy submarine. Our 6-inch gun was almost awash, but our gunners lost very little time in giving the arrival a taste of shot and shell. It soon disappeared into the darkness, and I believe it was badly damaged, if not sunk. About ten minutes later one of our corvettes loomed up and hove-to alongside us. We transferred our wounded to the care of the corvette surgeon and it was soon under way again.



T. C. SKEATS

It was still bitterly cold, and an order was given for surplus warm clothing to be commandeered from the officers' quarters and issued to the firemen and greasers who were shivering in their vests and overalls. The stern portion of our ship had ceased to sink and it was considered that she would probably remain afloat. Meanwhile, all hands stood by ready to abandon ship if



BREENDONCK PRISON CAMP, near Antwerp, was controlled by the Gestapo, who inflicted unspeakable tortures on their victims. Belgian food coupons as on right were stolen or printed by the Underground forces to obtain food for "wanted" men. PAGE 506 War Office photograph



I Was There!



MOTOR-VESSEL G. S. WALDEN, a helpless bulk of 11,000 tons, her engine-room smashed up, encountered further misfortunes whilst being towed (left). The hawser parted and a new one had to be prepared. On arrival at St. John's, Newfoundland (right), examination by divers revealed extensive damage to the stern and confirmed that rudder and propeller were missing. Disaster was only narrowly averted on the final stage of her journey to Halifax, Nova Scotia, when again the tow-rope parted. Skill and luck combined eventually saved her.

the need should arise. Rockets and flares still cast their yellow light over the scene and it became apparent that the majority of the vessels that had been in the convoy had disappeared. There was another large tanker, crippled like ourselves and wallowing. A freighter, away in the distance, appeared to be on fire. I knew three other fine ships had gone to the bottom in as many minutes.

Our corvette friend steamed up again, and a quick decision was made to attempt towing our helpless mass—an inert 11,000 tons. The corvette commander told us that he had radioed for salvage tugs but they would take a while to arrive as we were about 800 miles from the nearest land, which was Newfoundland. The following morning the corvette, without warning, dropped the towing hawser and made off at full speed, dropping "cans of concentrated hell" (depth charges) as she went—action which obviously indicated the presence of a lurking submarine. But no attack was made on us and four hours later the corvette returned.

We spent days and nights just wallowing in a long swell, with the corvette attending us. The only food we had was tinned salmon and potatoes; our store-rooms and refrigerators were under water and the galley was completely wrecked. But our cooks did a wonderful job: fried salmon and chips, salmon and mashed potatoes, salmon and potato fish cakes. So the menu went on, for about ten days. I haven't eaten salmon since! On the most miserable day of all, dawn brought swirling mists that shrouded the ship in a mantle of greyish gloom. We paced the bridge as usual, deriving cold comfort from Longfellow's "All things come round to him who will but wait."

At noon a Catalina flying boat passed over us—without seeing us, and we cursed the Newfoundland fog. But the Catalina proved to be the herald of our salvation. Late in the afternoon a dim shape emerged from the fog, and I recognized the familiar lines of a big salvage tug. A terrific cheer—amplified by the fog—greeted the new arrival, and almost immediately the difficult task of making a towing hawser fast was commenced. It took four weary hours of pulling, shouting, cursing and sweating before the job was executed. We calculated that about five more days should see us safely into the nearest port—a long and tedious voyage without heat, light or proper food. My thoughts turned to my dead watchmate who had perished in escaping; the

terrific inrush of water into the gaping hole had washed him up from the very bottom of the engine-room and he was able to clamber through a skylight, totally oblivious of a broken wrist.

Our progress was very slow and the next day misfortune overtook us again—the tow-rope parted. By dint of much hard labour a new hawser was prepared and the tug once more began towing us. And so we continued through six long and cheerless days and nights, the sailors attempting to sleep on the open decks 'midships and the firemen and stewards in the officers' saloon, for their own accommodation was awash and entirely uninhabitable. At last the friendly, rugged coast of Newfoundland loomed up and in no time at all we were passing through the narrow entrance of St. John's harbour. Loud cheers rent the air and we were soon moored to a large buoy. The mainbrace was spliced then as it had never been spliced before!

Many days of official visits by shore authorities followed, and the ship's hull was examined by divers. This revealed extensive damage to our stern and confirmed our idea that the rudder and the propeller were missing. No trace was then found of the

dead engineer, and it was presumed his body had floated away through the hole in our hull. We lay six weeks in that anchorage and it was finally decided that we were to be moved to a suitable port for repairs. Eventually, with fresh stores aboard, we once more were taken in tow. After one day at sea the weather broke and we were subjected to a very trying time by the pounding of waves on our helpless hulk.

ONE of the engineers, rummaging about in the flooded engine-room, discovered the battered and decomposing body of his missing colleague. It came as a great shock to all hands after such a lapse of time. The unrecognizable remains were sewn in canvas and we covered it with the flag he had served—the red ensign. Two days later we reached Halifax, Nova Scotia, not without mishap. When nearing a dangerous shoal the tow-rope parted and only by the most amazing combination of skill and luck was disaster averted and the vessel safely moored. The next day officers and men attended the funeral of the engineer, his work done and his voyage over. Ours was, too, as far as saving the ship went. The important thing was that she "lived to fight another day."

NEW FACTS AND FIGURES

REPLYING to a question in the House of Commons on October 22, 1946, as to the number of carrier pigeons, dogs, horses and other animals used by the Army during the war, the Financial Secretary to the War Office stated that the peak total of carrier pigeons in use by Royal Signals was 157 lofts in all theatres of war, containing in all about 15,700 pigeons. The number of animals employed by the Army in all theatres during the war was approximately 40,000 horses, 120,000 mules, 6,000 bullocks, 16,000 camels, and 5,000 dogs. These, apart from the dogs, represented riding and transport animals.

ON November 11, 1946, in the Allied war cemetery in Berlin the bodies of 70 Allied airmen were reburied. Killed in bombing raids, they had been laid in temporary graves on the outskirts of the city. The reburial service was attended by officers from the R.A.F. station at Gatow, and two Grenadier Guardsmen sounded the Last Post.

THE bodies of 16 British airmen killed while attempting to bring aid to the Poles during the Warsaw rising of 1944 were reburied in the Polish military cemetery in Warsaw in November 1946. The ceremony

was attended by the air attaché at the British Embassy, and a company of Polish infantry mounted a guard of honour.

IN recognition of help given by Australia, an ancient Corinthian urn, containing soil from the graves of Australian soldiers who died in Greece, has been presented to Mr. Chifley, Australian Prime Minister. The urn is believed to be 2,600 years old and had been a museum-piece in Greece for hundreds of years. In making the presentation in Australia, Mr. Stratigos, Vice-President of the Australian-Greek League in Athens, said it was the first time in Grecian history that soil had been presented to another country.

THERE were about 7,200,000 German prisoners in Allied hands when the European war ended, according to a statement from U.S. Army H.Q. in Frankfurt. It was expected that all P.O.W. held by the United States in the European theatre would be discharged by July 1, 1947. In November 1946 these totalled 59,000 in the European theatre and 30,000 in the Mediterranean. Prisoners held by U.S. authorities in France would be returned to Germany by March 1947; those in Italy were being repatriated at the rate of 1,000 a week.

*V.C. from India Views Wanders of London*



**NAIK KAMAL RAM**, who won his V.C. as a 19-year-old sepoy with the 8th Punjab Regt. (8th Indian Div.) in Italy in 1944, came to England recently under a leave scheme enabling troops of the Indian Army in the Mediterranean and Middle East to see something of this country. A friendly policeman points out to him interesting features of Buckingham Palace architecture; and Naik Kamal Ram will return home with proud memories of his glimpse of the royal residence in London. See also page 174, Vol. 8  
*Photo, Central Press*

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